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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **PSC Urges Caution During Massive Ice Storm** ***Residents should expect extended outages, but prepare for power restoration***

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 28, 2009) - The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) is urging residents affected by this week's massive ice storm to exercise caution and to expect to be without power for several days.

As of noon Wednesday morning, utilities under the PSC's jurisdiction had reported that about 475,000 customers were without power. That figure does not include rural electric cooperatives within the Tennessee Valley Authority system or any municipal utilities.

The outages extend across the entire state, ranging from Ballard County in the west to Boyd County in the east.

This is the second-largest power outage ever recorded in Kentucky. The only larger outage occurred on Sept. 14, 2008, when the remnants of Hurricane Ike swept across the state and knocked out power to about 600,000 customers.

"It is just astounding that we would have two such widespread, yet very different, disasters within the span of five months," Governor Steve Beshear said. "I urge all Kentuckians to be patient and to give utility workers the cooperation they will need to complete what is going to be a very difficult and complicated restoration effort."

Utilities are telling the PSC that restoration efforts may not be completed until next week.

The PSC is urging residents affected by the ice storm to check electric connections and meters for damage. Damaged connections or meters must be repaired before power can be restored to a home or business.

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Falling or sagging power lines may have damaged the connections between the utility company's overhead line and a customer's electric system. The connections are usually in the form of a masthead – a conduit connected to the service line – or, in older homes, an eyebolt which holds the line in place and an insulated line leading to the meter. In some cases, the meter or meter base may also be damaged.

Once power is restored, damaged connections or meters could pose an electrical or fire hazard if not repaired or if repaired improperly.

"It is critical that damaged connections be repaired by a qualified professional and inspected before power is restored," PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. "In past outages, fires and severe damage have been caused by damaged or improperly repaired service connections."

Repairing a service connection or meter base is the responsibility of the individual customer.

The meter base is the square or rectangular box on which the meter itself is mounted. It belongs to the property owner. The meter itself – the circular, glass-enclosed portion that attaches to the meter base - is the property of the utility company.

Customers with damaged connections or meters should take the following steps:

- Notify the utility company that the service connection, meter base and/or meter is damaged. The utility can then make sure that the line is not energized until repairs are completed.
- In the event that only the meter itself is damaged, contact the utility to have it repaired or replaced and your service restored.
- Contact an electrician to repair the meter base or service connection. The repair work can be done prior to power being restored in an area, thus eliminating any additional delays.
- The electrician will obtain the proper meter base from the utility. Some utilities impose no charge for the meter base, but the customer will bear the installation cost.
- Have the repairs inspected by a state-certified inspector working for your local government. The electrician should be able to help arrange the inspection.
- Notify the utility when the repairs are complete and have been approved. A utility technician will install a new meter and restore the power.
- Keep all repair records and contact your property insurer.

Residents SHOULD NOT attempt to remove any branches, limbs or trees that have fallen across service connections or other utility lines. Notify the utility to arrange for the debris to be removed.

The PSC also reminds customers using a generator for temporary electrical power to do so in a manner that insures the their safety and the safety of those working to restore power.

Keys to safe operation of generators include:

- To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning, generators should only be operated outside in well-ventilated areas. Do not operate generators in your garage.
- Make sure a generator is properly sized for the load you will place on it. Remember that starting an electric motor, such a refrigerator compressor, requires more electricity than the amount needed to keep it running. **DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUR GENERATOR.**
- Use only three-prong, grounded extension cords, properly rated for the load, to connect appliances to generators.
- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FEED POWER INTO YOUR HOME BY ADAPTING AN EXTENSION CORD TO CONNECT A GENERATOR TO A WALL OUTLET. THIS CAN CAUSE A FIRE.
- **DO NOT CONNECT A GENERATOR TO INSIDE WIRING IN ANY WAY UNLESS YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IS EQUIPPED WITH A TRANSFER SWITCH THAT PREVENTS POWER FROM FLOWING BACK INTO (BACKFEEDING) THE WIRES THAT SUPPLY YOUR ELECTRICITY.**

Backfeeding poses a severe danger to workers attempting to restore electrical service. They can be severely injured or killed by power flowing back into lines which they assume are not carrying electricity. Also, if the line to your home or business becomes grounded, backfeeding can permanently damage your generator.

“Getting everybody’s power restored after a storm of this magnitude and especially in these very difficult working conditions is going to take some time,” Armstrong said. “People need to be patient and, above all, remain safe.”

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.